



## External Assessment Report 2009

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Subject	English for Speakers of Other Languages
Level	Higher

**The statistics used in this report are pre-appeal.**

**This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding. It would be helpful to read this report in conjunction with the published question papers and marking instructions for the Examination.**

## Comments on candidate performance

A comparison between component average marks in 2008 and 2009 shows that candidate performance in the Speaking component 1 has changed little since 2008, whereas candidate performance in Component 2 has dropped slightly. .

	2009	2008
Component 1 (Speaking)	18.7/25	18.3/25
Component 2 (Listening, Reading and Writing)	48.3/75	51.9/75

The format of the questions followed the pattern of 2008, the only change being the addition of a matching task in Reading, text 1.

### Writing

Part 1 – Error Correction - showed a good spread of marks with the average score being 3.24.

In Part 2 – Everyday Communication - the average score was 5.4 ( out of 8)

In Part 3, 43% of candidates chose to answer Task 2 – Work, and 56% chose Task 3 – Study. The average score for Task 2 was 8.5 (out of 12) and for Task 3, 8.3.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Both papers produced a good spread of marks. As with 2008 there were some excellent submissions in the Writing section.

As a result of the 2008 benchmarking exercise, mapping ESOL Higher against the Common European Framework, setters reviewed question types and level to test a wider range of skills. As noted from the statistics, candidate performance in Component B was slightly down on the previous year and it is felt this better reflects the level. Some more small changes have been introduced for 2010 and centres will be informed of these changes in autumn 2009.

This year the Writing part 2 Work and Study writing choices were in the form of a report and an essay and it was noted that some candidates produced interesting, well structured reports and well argued essays.

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Both the Listening and Reading sections contained good discriminating questions, for example, Listening Questions 1 iii and iv, 4, 5, 8 iv; Reading Questions 1 ii, 4, 6 ii and vii.

In Listening it was fairly obvious that candidates took some time to ‘tune in’ to the Listening since Q1 in section A recording 1 was in general less well answered.

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

Centres should be commended for entering well-prepared candidates at the correct level. Centre estimates were close as regards grade A but were slightly optimistic for grade B and C.

As mentioned last year other changes have been implemented for 2011, such as a wider range of question types in the Reading section, and multiple choice questions with 3 rather than 4 choices in Listening. Centres will be informed of any changes.

Centres should continue to encourage candidates to check for correct spelling of their answers, not only in Reading and Writing sections but also in the Listening section where, although some inaccuracies in spelling are permissible, they should be minimal.

In Writing, where the questions contain information in bullet points as a guide to candidates, it is important that candidates do not simply repeat the bullet points. They are expected to provide support for each point made - the more developed the support the better, in terms of marks.

## Statistical information: update on Courses

Number of resulted entries in 2008	287
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Number of resulted entries in 2009	436
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## Statistical information: Performance of candidates

### Distribution of Course awards including grade boundaries

Distribution of Course awards	%	Cum. %	Number of candidates	Lowest mark
Maximum Mark - 100				
A	43.6%	43.6%	190	70
B	21.6%	65.1%	94	60
C	12.6%	77.8%	55	50
D	5.7%	83.5%	25	45
No award	16.5%	100.0%	72	-

## General commentary on grade boundaries

- While SQA aims to set examinations and create marking instructions which will allow a competent candidate to score a minimum of 50% of the available marks (the notional C boundary) and a well prepared, very competent candidate to score at least 70% of the available marks (the notional A boundary), it is very challenging to get the standard on target every year, in every subject at every level.
- Each year SQA therefore holds a grade boundary meeting for each subject at each level where it brings together all the information available (statistical and judgemental). The Principal Assessor and SQA Qualifications Manager meet with the relevant SQA Business Manager and Statistician to discuss the evidence and make decisions. The meetings are chaired by members of the management team at SQA.
- The grade boundaries can be adjusted downwards if there is evidence that the exam is more challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.

- The grade boundaries can be adjusted upwards if there is evidence that the exam is less challenging than usual, allowing the pass rate to be unaffected by this circumstance.
- Where standards are comparable to previous years, similar grade boundaries are maintained.
- An exam paper at a particular level in a subject in one year tends to have a marginally different set of grade boundaries from exam papers in that subject at that level in other years. This is because the particular questions, and the mix of questions are different. This is also the case for exams set in centres. If SQA has already altered a boundary in a particular year in say Higher Chemistry this does not mean that centres should necessarily alter boundaries in their prelim exam in Higher Chemistry. The two are not that closely related as they do not contain identical questions.
- SQA's main aim is to be fair to candidates across all subjects and all levels and maintain comparable standards across the years, even as arrangements evolve and change.